



LIFE SKILLS

5 THINGS TO SAY TO SOMEONE WITH CANCER

Whether it's a friend, a colleague, or a family member that has been diagnosed with cancer, it's normal not to know what to say to them when you first hear the news. What if you say something offensive or come across as insincere? Sometimes it feels easier to avoid the situation completely, but the worst thing you can do is to cut someone off who needs your support.

1. *"I'm dropping off dinner tonight."*

People with cancer go through a lot. On top of it they still need to feed their kids, go to work, and deal with hefty bills. But, you can lighten their load by helping with some of their tasks. Cooking them dinner shows that you care without having to say a word. You can also do some of their house chores, fetch their kids from school, or get their post.

2. *"What are you O.K. talking about?"*

Some people with cancer want to talk about their experience, the process they are going through, and even their fear of death, while others would rather avoid the subject altogether. If you're not sure whether they want to talk, ask what they are comfortable talking about. Do they want to talk about their illness, or would they rather discuss what's happening at work? Knowing their boundaries can help you identify suitable topics and ensure that you don't end up hurting their feelings or offending them.

3. *"You're handling this with such grace."*

People battling cancer are often compared to warriors or fighters, but just like anyone, they don't always feel strong and you saying so may make them feel like a failure or that they're letting people down. If you want to say something supportive rather commend them for handling their situation with grace, which doesn't mean strong or weak.

4. *"How do you feel?"*

Sometimes we want to come across as sympathetic and caring but you could end up saying things like, "I cried all night last night when I thought about you". It's great that you care, but it's not going to cheer anyone up and focussing on your own feelings can make it worse for the person with cancer. Instead, ask them how they are feeling. When you listen to what they have to say it can mean the world to them. It doesn't mean that you are not allowed to talk about your feelings, but do so with caution.

5. *"Let's not talk about cancer."*

Talking continually about cancer can get tiring, especially for someone who has it. Speaking about everyday stuff, like the new hit series or a new restaurant you love, may offer people with cancer a welcome distraction, especially after a particularly bad day.